

## **Frequently Asked Questions about the Professional Readiness Examination**

### **Why are we using the Professional Readiness Examination (PRE)?**

Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) Section 380.1531 states that the superintendent of public instruction may only issue a teacher certificate to a person who has passed appropriate examinations. Those examinations include a test of basic skills. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has adopted the Professional Readiness Examination (PRE) for that examination of basic skills.

### **Why did the pass rates decline when we moved from the old Basic Skills Test to the PRE?**

MDE revised the PRE to align to the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC)/Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The PRE became operational during October 2013. The passing scores for the PRE were recommended to MDE by a committee of Michigan K-12 teachers and Michigan college/university teacher educators. The lower pass rates are a result of many factors, including:

1. A cut or passing score that was set at a more stringent standard for approval
2. Test structure is different – including multiple choice items and an additional constructed written response prompt
3. New standards are being assessed; the Basic Skills Test was constructed from reading, mathematics, and writing expectations from the late 1980's.

When the committee recommended the revised cut score for the PRE to MDE, it did so with knowledge of the impact on pass rates. MDE supported the committee's recommendation in 2013, and still supports the committee's recommendation today.

### **Can you tell us more about how Michigan Educators are involved in the test development process?**

Bias review committees, content advisory committees, item review committees and standard setting panels recruited for every MTTC test development process are composed solely of Michigan educators from K-12 settings and from Michigan's colleges and universities.

The K-12 committee members hold state authorization in the content of the MTTC test under development. The college and university educators have terminal degrees or documented professional experience in the content, and represent Michigan's education programs or departments, as well as non-education programs or departments. Between twelve to twenty Michigan educators comprise a committee, in a distribution pattern of approximately 60% K-12 educators and 40% college or university educators (including community college educators). The 60%/40% distribution is designed to provide job-relatedness perspective for the MTTC development committees.

Specifically for the PRE, members of Michigan's literacy and mathematics education communities were involved in all aspects of the test development process. The resulting test represents the considered opinion of this group of expert stakeholders that the content assessed by the PRE aligns closely with the test objectives, the HSCE and MMC, as well as their collective understanding of the "level of content knowledge required to perform effectively in their student teaching assignment."

### **Can Michigan use the PRAXIS® Core Academic Skills for Educator Tests instead of the PRE?**

Both the PRE and the Praxis® Core are designed to measure the skills and content knowledge of candidates entering teacher preparation programs. Both the PRE and the Praxis® Core are aligned to CCSS.

Currently, MDE is using the PRE instead of the Praxis® Core due to the following reasons:

1. The items on the PRE have been reviewed and approved by committees of Michigan K-12 teachers and Michigan college/university teacher educators.
2. We have conducted an alignment to ensure that the PRE measures the K-12 MMC standards. Those standards are assessed on the high school Michigan Merit Examination. Since both tests assess the same standards, and we have access to PRE and MME performance data sets, we were able to establish an equivalency. This equivalency allows prospective teaching candidates the opportunity to use MME test results in lieu of paying to retest using the PRE.
3. Currently, the PRAXIS® Core Academic Skills test costs \$135 per student. Michigan Law limits the basic skills assessment fee to \$75 per student.

### **Can you tell us more about the PRE's alignment to the CCSS?**

The work to update the original Basic Skills Test was influenced by the passing of the MMC<sup>1</sup> in 2006, which stated that all students (beginning with those who were 8<sup>th</sup> graders in 2006) needed to be proficient with the state content expectations that included 4 credits of mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA), and 3 credits of science and social studies.

At the same time, the MDE released content expectations for high school mathematics, and ELA followed the next year, along with the science and social studies high school expectations. Known by their acronym of the HSCE, these sets of standards for each of the content areas were developed with input from nationally-known education and content experts from Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs).

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<sup>1</sup> See [MCL 380.1278a](#) and [MCL 380.1278b](#).

Since students graduating from high school (starting with the class of 2010) were expected to know the content outlined by the HSCE, it seemed reasonable to anticipate that teacher candidates entering teaching programs starting in 2013 would also know this content. In 2010, Michigan adopted the CCSS for mathematics and ELA. Alignment of the HSCE to the CCSS in both subject areas suggested that the two sets of content standards were highly aligned and therefore the PRE for both these subject areas was still aligned to the content knowledge that students leaving high school were expected to have.

It should be noted that Michigan's HSCE for science and social studies have not changed. All current K-12 academic standards can be found at [www.michigan.gov/academicstandards](http://www.michigan.gov/academicstandards). More information on the MMC can be found at [www.michigan.gov/highschool](http://www.michigan.gov/highschool).

### **How can we be certain that the PRE is reliable and/or valid?**

The PRE is valid and reliable for its purpose. The PRE's purpose is to assure teacher candidates have reading, mathematics, and writing knowledge aligned with the MMC and MI State Board of Education (SBE) K-12 standards for Michigan's 21<sup>st</sup> century students.

Evaluation Systems (ES) and MDE follow a consistent and research-based test development process for every Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC). Comprehensive information about the process is available.

PRE validity is based on:

1. the alignment of the RE objective framework to Michigan SBE approved standards for K-12 students;
2. Michigan K-12 teachers' and college/university faculty review and approval of the PRE objective framework;
3. Michigan K-12 teachers' and college/university faculty statewide content validation survey;
4. Michigan K-12 teachers' and college/university faculty review and approval of PRE items;
5. Items were field tested on existing operational basic skills tests; and
6. Michigan K-12 teachers' and college/university faculty recommendation of passing (cut) score after completing item-by-item analysis of an actual PRE test form.

PRE reliability is based on:

1. statistical measurement of the degree to which test scores are consistent over repeated use;
2. interpretation of reliability coefficient values in a range from 0.00 to 1.00 with 0.90 and up indicating Excellent reliability, 0.80 – 0.89 indicating Good reliability, 0.70 - .079 indicating Adequate reliability;
3. performance of 60 or more test takers at any operational administration during a testing period; and

4. total test analysis, multiple-choice section analysis, and constructed-response section analysis.

For specific details related to MTTC validity and reliability processes please refer to the following documents:

MTTC Test Updating and Development Process:

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/1-26-2015\\_Test\\_development\\_figure\\_and\\_narrative\\_480592\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/1-26-2015_Test_development_figure_and_narrative_480592_7.pdf)

October 2012-September 2013 MTTC Technical Report:

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MI\\_2012\\_13\\_TestDev\\_Report\\_final\\_web\\_version\\_480588\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MI_2012_13_TestDev_Report_final_web_version_480588_7.pdf).

October 2012-September 2013 MTTC Technical Report Appendices:

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MI\\_2012\\_13\\_TestDev\\_Rpt\\_Appendix\\_final\\_web\\_version\\_480589\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MI_2012_13_TestDev_Rpt_Appendix_final_web_version_480589_7.pdf)).

Specific PRE reliability statistics will not be available until the October 2013-September 2014 MTTC Technical Report Appendices are published. Publication is expected during mid-May 2015.

<b>Do we really think that all teachers need to demonstrate knowledge of the content assessed on the PRE?</b>
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Yes.

Teacher candidates will have the responsibility of supporting children's development toward, and mastery of, the terminal proficiencies embodied by the Michigan Merit Curriculum and Michigan's academic standards for the core content areas. MDE feels that it is a reasonable expectation that, regardless of deficits in or recency of their own K-12 educations, teachers entering the profession demonstrate, at a minimum, the same terminal proficiencies toward which they will be preparing their students. MDE therefore does not believe that it is unfair to expect that all prospective teachers be proficient in these standards.

We do not believe that elementary teachers, or physical education teachers (examples that have been cited in the field as those who should be exempt), or any other teacher, should be required to know less than the equivalent of high school career and college readiness content.

We also believe that this content can be learned, and it is not unreasonable to expect a prospective candidate to have to study for the PRE just as one would the Graduate Readiness Examination or other professional tests.

Last, we want teacher candidates who are applying to the Colleges of Education prepared to focus on in-depth content and pedagogy rather than remediation of

high school academic content expectations. Time spent on remediation is time taken away from preparation for the profession.

### **How was the Career and College Ready benchmark on the MME derived?**

"The Benchmarks are scores on the ACT subject-area tests that represent the level of achievement required for students to have a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses. These college courses include English composition, college algebra, introductory social science courses, and biology. Based on a sample of 214 institutions and more than 230,000 students from across the United States, the Benchmarks are median course placement values for these institutions and as such represent a typical set of expectations."<sup>2</sup>

### **What is assessed by the PRE? The content is unclear.**

The PRE Study Guide, available on the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC) website (at [http://mttc.nesinc.com/MI\\_viewFW\\_opener.asp](http://mttc.nesinc.com/MI_viewFW_opener.asp)) provides the specific test objectives and the approximate percent of questions on the test in each subarea. A full length, online PRE practice test is available at the MTTC website, too.

### **We hear from our content experts that there is a misalignment between what people think are "basic skills" and the content assessed in the PRE – particularly in mathematics. How would you respond to this?**

At the start of this test development process, a content validation survey of K-12 educators, teacher educators and higher education content specialists was conducted in 2009 to determine their sense of how important the knowledge or skills represented by the proposed test objectives of the PRE mathematics and writing subtests were for candidates to have before beginning their student teaching requirement. Eight of the thirteen proposed mathematics objectives were determined to be of great or very great importance in this survey, with the remainder determined to be at least of moderate importance. A summary of the results of the content validation survey for the proposed PRE mathematics objectives is available upon request.

It should also be noted that U.S. teachers are already prepared less well in mathematics compared to their international peers, and that a recent study from the MSU Center for the Study of Curriculum found that "a richer grounding in mathematics content could likely pay tremendous dividends in terms of student learning."

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.act.org/solutions/college-career-readiness/college-readiness-benchmarks/>

**It has been asserted that because of the radical change in expectations from the previous 'basic skills' to the PRE, the state Department of Education itself had to quickly revise its passing guidelines. Is this accurate?**

The process by which the PRE equivalencies were developed is fully detailed in the Alternative Pass Measures on the Professional Readiness Exam policy brief (see [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Policy\\_Brief\\_Regarding\\_the\\_Professional\\_Readiness\\_Examination\\_453315\\_7.pdf?20141021100113](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Policy_Brief_Regarding_the_Professional_Readiness_Examination_453315_7.pdf?20141021100113)).

The equivalencies were created at the request of EPIs, and could only be completed once MDE had gathered sufficient MME, ACT and PRE data to calculate an equivalency to the PRE. Because PRE performance separately correlated with ACT performance and with MME performance, offering these equivalencies seemed a reasonable approach.

**There are other technical issues. What does a score of 220 on the PRE mean? How is it determined? What is the rubric for evaluating the constructed response writing samples?**

For details on how scaled scores and passing scores are derived for all MTTC assessments, please see the previously linked MTTC Technical Report, Chapter 7: Test Scoring and Reporting, beginning on page 63.

**Some educators have raised the concern that we are using a test to filter possible future teachers at the same time that we caution educators not to use this approach with learners. How would MDE respond to that?**

While it is mandated by law to act as a gateway for teacher candidates before beginning their clinical experience as teachers, we support the generally accepted practice of requiring passage of the PRE before admittance to a preparation program. The MDE sees this as a responsible policy that reduces the number of prospective teacher candidates who spend the money and time to start a teaching preparation program, only to be blocked mid-way if they cannot pass the PRE.

However, this also means that candidates who take the PRE earlier in their college careers (for example, as freshmen or early sophomores) will have more time to take advantage of remediation programs that may be offered to them after one or more subtests of the PRE have not been passed. As such, the PRE does not act as a "filter"; rather, it serves as a diagnostic tool for enhancing the understanding as to where a teacher candidate's strengths lie, as well as what their areas of needed improvement are.

The PRE might be seen as a true "filter" if it could only be taken once. However, there is no limit to the number of times a teacher candidate can take the various

subtests of the PRE. As such, there is an implied allowance for the improvement of a candidate's performance over time, and the expectation that a candidate will seek to sharpen skills and knowledge between test administrations. Accordingly, there is an expectation that an EPI will provide supports to those students during such remediation.

Furthermore, the PRE and other MTTC assessments may be regarded as a parallel to the certification and qualification examinations present in other professions. A prospective nursing student must demonstrate mastery of college algebra, chemistry and writing in order to be admitted into an RN program. A prospective law student pass the LSAT in order to qualify for admission to a law school program. As MDE strives to preserve and build respect for teaching as a profession, MDE seeks have some of the similar mechanisms present for teachers as we do for candidates entering other widely-respected professions, one where a qualifying measure is used to predict the readiness of a candidate entering the program.

**Some educators have noted that the diversity of our teaching force will be compromised if we put up inappropriate, archaic, unnecessarily academic, decontextualized, and meaningless hurdles. How would MDE respond?**

MDE believes all teacher candidates regardless of background should be held to a consistent standard. As teachers, these same candidates will have the responsibility of supporting all children's development toward and mastery of the terminal proficiencies embodied by the MMC and Michigan's academic standards for the core content areas. Ethically, we are required, as educators, to model the behavior we expect and support the idea that *all* teacher candidates are capable of learning the content on the PRE if they truly wish to become teachers. Michigan's institutes of higher education have a responsibility to support teacher candidates of diversity in such a way that does not include a differential level of expectation on teacher assessments, but supports their achievement on those assessments. Teacher candidates who do not demonstrate Michigan 21<sup>st</sup> Century high school academic basic skills and knowledge for entrance into preparation programs should be provided assistance, remediation, and support so that they are equally successful on entrance measures as any other candidate.